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191920Z Dec 05

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINGSTON 002728

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STATE FOR WHA/CAR (BENT), INL/LP (BOZZOLO)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/18/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [KCRM](#) [SNAR](#) [JM](#)

SUBJECT: SIX POLICE OFFICERS ON TRIAL FOR MURDER

Classified By: Ambassador Johnson. Reason 1.5(d)

Summary:

[1](#)1. (C) In late November, six Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) officers, all members of the now disbanded Crime Management Unit, were put on trial for the unlawful killing of four people at a home in Crawle, Clarendon in May 2003. Chief Judge Lensley Wolfe ruled that the prosecution failed to make a prima facie case against three of the officers and ordered the jury to release them. Deputy Commissioner of Police Mark Shields advised NAS Director on December 16 that he believes that all of the officers are going to "beat the rap." Political Ombudsman, Bishop Herro Blair also advised NAS Director that he had no faith in the judicial system and based on what he felt was the prosecution's inability to try the case, the officers would be back on duty in no time. End Summary.

The Trial

[1](#)2. (U) Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) Senior Superintendent Reneto Adams, corporals Shenie Lyons, Patrick Coke and constables Devon Bernard, Leford Gordon and Roderick Collier are on trial for the May 7, 2003 murder of four persons, namely, Angella Richards, Lewina Thompson, Kirk Gordon and Matthew Jones. Chief Justice Lensley Wolfe and a twelve-member jury are hearing the case. On December 12, Wolfe found that the prosecution failed to make a prima facie case against Constables Bernard and Collier and Corporal Gordon and ordered the jury to release them. The case against the remaining three officers is expected to be completed early this week.

[1](#)3. (U) According to the officers' testimony, they went to Crawle in search of Bashington "Chen-Chen" Douglas, who was wanted for a number of crimes, including murder. The police alleged they were fired upon by men in the house and the police returned the fire and four people were killed during the shootout. However, neighbors contradicted the police by alleging the victims were killed in cold blood. The Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) told the court that the policemen traveled in a disguised vehicle and after staking out the house, returned later and opened fire on the occupants. Director of the DPP, Kent Pantry stated that forensic evidence showed that three victims were shot by one gun. Pantry also stated that the evidence showed that shots were only fired from outside the house to the inside.

[1](#)4. (U) Shanice Stoddart, the 11-year old daughter of victim Lewina Thompson was a key prosecution witness. Stoddart testified at the trial that she and Angella Richards were hiding under a bed in the house when a police officer removed Stoddart from the house. The officer put Stoddart in the yard and told her to look away from the house. Stoddart testified that after officers went back into the house she heard Angella Richards begging for her life and shots fired.

[1](#)5. (U) Jack Craine, a forensic pathologist and professor at Queens University, Belfast, Northern Ireland, testified that the wounds sustained by the victims were not typical of those caused by a shoot-out. Rather, the wounds were consistent with having been shot in a controlled way. In addition, Craine stated that there was a possibility that victims Richard and Gordon were shot while lying on the floor.

[1](#)6. (U) Danhai Williams, a controversial "business man" and People's National Party (PNP) activist, was scheduled to testify on behalf of the prosecution that he provided the police officers with the unregistered gun allegedly planted at the crime scene. Williams was expected to give evidence in support of the prosecution's claim that Adams planted a gun on one of the dead victims. Williams did not appear at trial and through a statement made by his attorneys claimed that he was being harassed by the police and chose not to make himself available for testimony as it would have caused him to lie in open court. (Note: Williams, who is currently facing charges of defrauding the GOJ in an unrelated housing construction scheme, is a U.S. green card holder. Post

believes, however, that Williams has effectively abandoned his LPR status and we are consulting DHS accordingly.)

17. (C) Deputy Commissioner of Police Mark Shields is a 28-year-veteran of the London Metropolitan Police and was seconded to the JCF as deputy commissioner in charge of crime in March. Shields was also the lead investigator in the Crawle case in 2003. During a December 16 meeting with Shields, he stated that he believed all of the officers would "beat the rap" and that it would be a major turning point for Jamaica. He expressed disdain for Adams and stated that it was his personal and professional opinion that Adams is a "killer." He lamented that if Adams is found not guilty and put back on front-line duty, that Shields would resign the force immediately and return to the UK. Shields stated that he could not "work with someone he knew killed four people in cold blood."

18. (C) In addition, Shields stated that although he does not have hard evidence, he believes Adams is behind some of the threats that he has received on his life. Shields speculated that even if Adams were to be found not guilty he could be dismissed from the JCF "for the good of the service." Shields noted that with the overwhelming amount of evidence against him, it would be in the best interests of Jamaica if he were let out of the force. Shields also alleged that prosecution witness Danhai Williams was not afraid to appear in court as he claimed. Shields opined that Williams has a lot of backing within the PNP as well as within the JCF and noted that Williams did not reappear until after the defense closed its case and that he found that the timing was more than mere coincidence.

19. (C) Peace activist and Political Ombudsman, Bishop Herro Blair also advised NAS Director on December 17 that he had no faith in the judicial system and based on what he felt was the prosecution's inability to try the case, the officers would be back on duty in no time. Blair also alleged that Danhai Williams was not under any threat when he failed to appear in court and corroborated Shields' statement by stating that Williams has "too much political power to have to testify". Blair stated that if no one is found guilty in this case, it would be the "go-ahead for vigilantism."

Comment

10. (C) According to Amnesty International, only one police officer has been found guilty of unlawful killing in the last six years in Jamaica. Piers Bannister, the London-based researcher on Amnesty's North American team is quoted in the Observer on June 20 as saying "The police in Jamaica are immune from effective prosecution and are allowed to carry out killings with impunity..." Bannister has predicted that all six police officers will walk and will resume their jobs soon. As of now, Bannister is half right.

11. (C) There is a general distrust by many in Jamaica of the police and the judicial system in general. Some in garrison communities are fearful of police and see the police as an enemy. It is likely that the impunity with which police officers seem to operate in Jamaica contributes to this sentiment. Until officers are held accountable for extra judicial killings, the public distrust of the police and the judicial system will persevere. This lack of faith likely contributes to the periodic incidents of mob killings, where many people feel the only justice they will see is that which they mete out themselves against criminal oppressors. End Comment.
JOHNSON